



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Public Library

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CONTACT: Lynn Whitehouse
(619) 236-5821

Library to Show Cult Documentary Film “Wattstax” Featuring Major R&B, Gospel and Soul Stars of the Early 1970s

SAN DIEGO – The City of San Diego Public Library will host a screening of the documentary film “Wattstax” on Sunday, Sept. 12 at 2 p.m. in the third floor auditorium of the Central Library, located at 820 E St. in downtown San Diego. This event is FREE to the public.

In August 1972, seven years after the Watts riots, the legendary Stax recording label staged a benefit concert in Los Angeles for 90,000 people. They called it Wattstax, the “Black Woodstock,” but there are many differences between that seminal hippie event and the 1972 concert. Woodstock was all about peace, love and music. Wattstax, held three years later in Los Angeles, had those elements as well; but it was a more socio-politically charged event, with its emphasis on black pride and the simple opportunity for African-Americans to assert that “I am somebody.”

Hosted by the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Wattstax was a veritable who’s who of gospel, soul and R&B and was a mirror of various aspects of African-American culture. The newly restored concert film features trenchant commentary from comedian Richard Pryor, performances by Rufus Thomas, the Staple Singers, the Emotions and the Bar-Kays, and includes the grand finale (not seen in the original film) — Isaac Hayes’ electrifying “Theme From Shaft.”

This film screening is part of the Public Broadcast System’s POV series and is much less a music movie than a chronicle of black life as what Richard Pryor calls “a soulful expression of the black experience.”

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